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Dear Most Valuable People,

We are writing to you to explain exactly what was passed by the National Presbyterian Church USA and to tell you how your session is responding. The Presbyterian Church recently ratified an amendment to our constitution that in some Presbyteries if the local church or Presbytery allows it will allow practicing homosexuals to be ordained to the office of deacon, elder and pastor.

### **Background**

Since 1978 the PCUSA has consistently maintained that the only biblically appropriate expression of sexuality is within the covenant of marriage between one man and one woman. This standard was codified in 1996 in a section of our Book of Order that came to be known as G6.0106b or G6 for short. G6 stated, "Those who are called to office in the church are to lead a life in obedience to Scripture and in conformity to the historic confessional standards of the church. Among these standards is the requirement to live either in fidelity within the covenant of marriage between a man and a woman or chastity in singleness...."

Four times in the last eight years attempts have been made to remove or soften that language by the General Assembly of our denomination. Our church's constitution requires that any change in our Book of Order be ratified by votes in each of the 173 Presbyteries. Each time the presbyteries have voted no on the General Assemblies recommendation and retained the language of G6. That is until now.

### **What has changed?**

The following language to be substituted is Amendment 10-A, "Standards for ordained service reflect the church's desire to submit joyfully to the Lordship of Jesus Christ in all aspects of life. The governing body responsible for ordaining or installing shall examine each candidate's calling, gifts, preparation and suitability for the responsibilities of office. The examination shall include but not be limited to, a determination of the candidate's ability and commitment to fulfill all requirements as expressed in the constitutional questions for ordination and installation. Governing bodies shall be guided by Scripture and the confessions in applying standards to individual candidates."

### **What happens now?**

Since authority for the ordination of deacons and elders rests with the local church nothing will change in those churches, including MVPC, that are guided by the plain language of scripture. And nothing will change in those Presbyteries with regard to the ordination and installation of pastors who apply the plain meaning of scripture and the confessions. Each Presbytery has authority to ordain and install. Seattle Presbytery and all the Presbyteries in Washington according to the way they voted will continue not to allow practicing homosexual persons to be ordained or installed as pastors. It will take some vigilance in Seattle but that is the majority opinion in our Presbytery. Across the country it is quite definite that in some Presbyteries that practicing homosexual people will be allowed to be ordained and installed.

So what does this mean for MVPC? Actually almost nothing in the short term future, because we will continue to be faithful to scripture and the confessions that unequivocally identify sexual activity outside the bounds of marriage as sin and thus an activity that disqualifies a person to serve as an officer in our local church.

### **What about the long term?**

There are many questions that must be answered for our long term future. Has the PCUSA denied the authority of scripture by violating the clear meaning of scripture in the area of sexual practice? Can our local church still be associated with a body that will allow ordination of practicing homosexual persons in violation of the clear meaning of scripture? Is there a place for connection in the midst of deep disagreement, especially since a majority in Seattle Presbytery disagrees with the national church decision? If we were to attempt to be dismissed to another denomination, how does that affect the other orthodox churches left behind in Seattle Presbytery?

These and other questions your Session is addressing. We recently spent time praying and searching the scripture on this matter. We will continue to discuss these questions as well as interact with like minded churches in the Seattle area and elsewhere. This is going to be a long journey so please put on the fruit of the spirit and in particular patience. The session needs your faithful prayers as we prayerfully attempt to discern God's will for MVPC. The Session very much wants to hear your concerns and questions. We would like to hear from you, so please feel free to submit your questions and comments to [ddiehl@mvpc.net](mailto:ddiehl@mvpc.net). We will hold a congregational Q and A session as soon as we feel we have enough information.

### **The core of the issue.**

We want to remind everyone that this issue is about church leadership-deacons, elders, and pastors. Jesus loves all people regardless of their walk in life. Everyone is invited to participate in the life of the community of faith. Anyone can be a member of the church and participate in the life of our church. Only those seeking ordination to church leadership as deacon, elder and pastor are called to a higher standard. People called to leadership offices are to be examined to see if they are living lives in line with scripture and the confessions. We are not looking for perfect people for leadership, for of course none of us are even close to perfect, but simply those who seek to honor God and his commandments through their life choices.

### **What does your session believe?**

We support the teaching of our pastor on the clear meaning of scripture and we encourage you to listen to the sermon from the 22nd of May to understand the position of the session of MVPC. You can access it on line at [www.mvpc.net](http://www.mvpc.net) and click on *sermons* and then choose ***Issues Part 2: Same Sex or Opposite Sex.***

Sincerely in our Lord's Service,

The session of MVPC

Jo Clark, Susan Woodside, Becky Miller, Gary Clark, Pete O'Brien, Joel Wright, Laura Goldsmith, Kim Newell, Liann Holt, Gavin Fysh, Jay Kraus, Kevin Malone, Sue Ableidinger and Pastor David